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FLARR Pages #14: Web Pages as Teaching Tools, Part II

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FLARR PAGES #14 (F, '98)

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File under:
Web Pages
Teaching with Web
Pages
Techniques: Web
Pages
Planning Web Pages

"Web Pages as Teaching Tools, Part II"

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Now to the practicalities of having
a Web Site: class use, what to include,
time involved, rules of thumb:

3. How can I use the WWW in my classroom?

According to Brian Butler from Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, PA, there are three ways in which we can use the WWW. I am including the conceptual framework here because what he has studied and researched has been important to what I do in class when I use the WWW and Web pages as learning tools. The WWW can be used "as a tool for bringing the world to the classroom, ... as a tool for supporting classroom activities, and... as a tool for opening the classroom to the world (2).

In my classroom, my students have used the WWW in those three ways. Some ideas follow:

In my third year (level) Spanish class, students are exploring, learning, reading, and writing about Latin American cultures, from the first people who populated America to the Twentieth Century, with an emphasis on the latter. The students in this endeavor search for specific material, an opportunity to bring the world into our classroom through supplemental readings. Sometimes I give the students the address to sites I want them to visit, guiding them to good sources of information (e.g. libraries in Latin American countries). Other times, I just ask the students to search the net for material on a

3. (cont)

specific topic or even on a specific organization (for example, when we studied education in Latin America, I asked the students to go to a specific Ecuadorian school site to find out more about its program). The results have been very exciting, not only for me but for the students as well.

With this same class, as a way of using the "WWW as a tool for opening the classroom to the world," (Butler, 2) and as their final project, I have them create a personal Web Page. Each student researches a topic related to the themes examined in class, develops a Web Page that will be published as a link to his/her personal Web Page on the WWW. We started this project at the beginning of the semester in the computer lab and slowly but steadily we have been building it. Because none of my students had had previous experience with personal Web Pages, this project has been challenging for all of us.

In my first and second year classes, I have used the "WWW as a tool for bringing the world to the classroom," and also "... as a tool for supporting classroom activities." (Butler, 2). Some examples of activities are: go to the meteorological center in Madrid and find out what the temperature and the weather will be like in these Spanish cities, or go to "x" province and find out what movies they are showing in different movie theaters, and at what time.

4. What should I include in my Web Page, if I decide to create one?

My advice is that you include material, links, pictures, etc. that will be of help and of use to your students. When I decided to create the Web Page, I chose to base it on the

4. (Cont.)

needs of my first year students. I spent long hours searching the net and making links between good sources and my Web Page. What I mean by "good" sources are sites that provide my students with the kinds of materials they need and at the level of complexity (language, jargon, slang, etc.) that they need or can comprehend. Usually I try to find sites only in Spanish, however some of the bilingual sites are very good and I have incorporated them also.

After the sites were chosen and compiled into a Web Page, I created activities based on my students' needs related to what the different sites had to offer.

5. Once I have my Web Page, is there something I need to know?

Creating the Web Page will be the most time consuming task you will have to undertake. After the web page is created, then it is just a matter of keeping the links and the material you have included up to date. It is extremely important that before you send your students to look for material in the net you do your homework first. Many times links are temporarily closed, they "disappear" or sometimes they move to a different address. You must mirror these changes on your Web Page. Also you should continually search for topics you use frequently, because the WWW is an ever-growing database in which new titles are incorporated daily.

6. What are my rules of thumb when working with web pages as tools?

1) The most important issue when dealing with computers (and with education in general) regards the instructions we give out to the students to follow to complete their assignments. These directions must be very clear and specific.

2) Decide if a Web Page with links to the WWW or with internal links is what you and your students need. Take into account age group, maturity, and the work ethic of your group.

6 (Cont.)

3) Use variety in your classroom technology. Computers and the WWW are fascinating tools, however, we must not forget that there are plenty of other tools available to us and sometimes they are more adequate for specific student or classroom needs.

There are many other questions to be addressed regarding Web Pages, so if you would like to develop your own or use the one I have developed, do not hesitate to contact me by e-mail at **ltolosa@cord.edu** or by phone at **218-299-3941**. I would be delighted to lend you a hand and give you specific ideas for activities. My Web Page address follows. Enjoy the visit!

<<http://www.cord.edu/faculty/ltolosa/index.html>>

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